

GREAT BUDDHIST TOPE AT SANCHI.

The sculptures of the capitals are:—Northern and eastern gates: elephants and riders. Southern gate: lions. Western gate: dwarfs.

The block caps of each gate represent crouched animals and riders placed back to back (like the capitals at Persepolis), elephants, horses, winged lions, tigers, bullocks, dromedaries, goats, deer, and horned griffins with wings. The upright bars of the cross rails are variously carved with conventional flowers and emblems.

The bas-reliefs covering the pillars and cross lintels represent scenes described at length by General Cunningham and Mr. Fergusson. The subjects are generally as follows:—1. The dream and conception of Maya, the mother of Buddha. 2. Prince Siddartha's trial of the bow. 3. Prince Siddartha's life, palace scenes, love scenes, social life. 4. Prince Siddartha witnessing the four predictive signs. 5. Prince Siddartha's departure from Kapila. 6. Buddha's visit to Uruvilwa Kasyapa. 7. Boat scene and Buddha's Nirvana. 8. Worship of topes, trees, symbols. 9. Worship of trees by animals. 10. Siege of a city and relic capture. 11. Relic processions. 12. Triumphal processions. 13. Besides these historical records there are panels of flowers, animals and garlands, treated in a conventional manner, showing Greek and Persian origin.

As regards dress, it is noticeable that the women are represented naked; a simple girdle of beads or jewels round the loins is in many cases the only covering. The hair is plaited down the back in a most elaborate fashion. They wear jewellery, such as earrings, necklets, and bangles for both arms and ankles. The men are generally draped below the waist and sometimes about the shoulders, with the right arm left bare. Their turbans are elaborately tied, and are sometimes jewelled.

In one sculpture, representing the worship of a tope, the men are evidently strangers, apparently from the north, and are clad like the inhabitants of the Himalayas.

The arms represented include spears, bows, swords, battle-axes and shields. Chariots are shown drawn by four horses abreast, and by one or more pairs. Elephants are furnished with handsome trappings, howdahs and bells, as they are at the present day. Horses are depicted with head-plumes, and harnessed much as now, both for riding and driving. We see women drawing water, husking and winnowing corn, making chappatties in the primitive method still practised in India. Ascetics are shown hewing wood with axes and using the banghy. A boat is represented, sewn together with hemp or bark, precisely as in many parts of India at the present day. Beds, like the ordinary charpoy, ornamental seats or thrones and footstools are used.

Of musical instruments, one may observe the drum, long horns (like those blown now-a-days in temples), flutes, guitars, harps, and the double Roman pipe.

Banners appear with diagonal stripes like the British Union Jack; garlands and emblems upheld by long poles, and umbrellas of state are carried in procession.

The Buddhist sculptures of Gandhara found on the frontiers of Afghanistan are of about the same period as the Sanchi bas-reliefs. In them we see the effects of the Greek and Persian artistic influence which filtered throughout India. Although more refined in execution and design, and more classical in style, they give us no such varied pictures of manners and customs of India, eighteen hundred years ago, as we have here.